

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 05002 082223Z

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7198

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 5002

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AR

SUBJECT: CONTINGENCY PAPER FOR ARGENTINA

REF: STATE 144345

1. SUMMARY: INTER-AGENCY PAPER REFERENCED IN REFTEL PROVIDES EXCELLENT ANALYSIS OF SCENE. THOUGH IT WAS WRITTEN SOME EIGHT MONTHS AGO, ITS CONCLUSIONS APPEAR TO BE DURABLY SOUND. EMBASSY HAS FEW MINOR SUGGESTIONS FOR UPDATING AND REVISIONS, BUT IN MAIN, PAPER CAN STAND AS IS. SUGGESTED CHANGES ARE AS FOLLOWS:
END SUMMARY.

2. PAGES 10 AND 11, ROMAN NUMERAL THREE: EMBASSY BELIEVES MRS PERON'S TENURE DEPENDS NOT ONLY UPON HOW LONG IT TAKES TO FIND ANOTHER ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM, BUT ALSO UPON HOW WELL SHE PLAYS HER PRESENT ROLE. FEW EXPECT HER TO PERFORM ADEQUATELY AND THERE IS A GREAT QUESTION AS TO WHETHER SHE REALLY WANTS TO BE PRESIDENT. NONETHELESS, THE OUTSIDE CHANCE THAT SHE MAY PERFORM BETTER THAN MOST OBSERVERS EXPECT SHOULD NOT BE IGNORED. ALSO, IN THE SAME PARAGRAPH, CHANGING LINES IN THE POWER STRUGGLE MAKE IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT LOPEZ REGA, SOLANO LIMA, LASTIRI AND GELBARD COULD WORK TOGETHER IN A SMALL GROUP OF ADVISERS. LOPEZ REGA AND GELBARD DESPISE SOLANO LIMA AND HE RETURNS THEIR SENTIMENTS WITH EQUAL CONVICTION. FURTHER, THE FORMER TWO ARE ALSO NOW IN AN ADVERSARY RELATIONSHIP.

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 05002 082223Z

3. PAGE 12, OPTION H: EMBASSY BELIEVES IT WOULD BE BEST NOT RPT

NOT TO CONSULT WITH BRAZIL "ON WHAT USEFUL ACTIONS COULD BE TAKEN TO SUPPORT STABILITY IN ARGENTINA." THERE IS TOO GREAT A RISK, IN OUR VIEW, THAT THE BRAZILIANS MIGHT PLAY IT BACK TO THE ARGENTINES TO OUR OWN DISADVANTAGE.

4. PAGE 12, ROMAN NUMERAL FOUR: SOME FORM OF COUNCIL, WITH MRS PERON AS TITULAR CHIEF OF STATE AND POSSIBLY WITH A DE FACTO "PRIME MINISTER" TO RUN THINGS, MIGHT BE MORE DURABLE THAN SUGGESTED. IT WOULD HAVE TO INCLUDE SOME CAPABLE MEN AND BASE ITS ACTIONS ON A COINCIDENCE OF VIEWS. WITH THESE PROVISOS FULFILLED, IT MIGHT PROVE WORKABLE, AND SO LONG AS MRS PERON REMAINED PRESIDENT, THERE WOULD BE NO NEED TO CONVOKE ELECTIONS.

5. PAGE 13, FOOTNOTE: LAW NO 252 OF SEPTEMBER 19, 1868, SPECIFIES THE PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AS NEXT IN ORDER OF SUCCESSION AFTER THE VICE PRESIDENT, FOLLOWED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES.

6. PAGE 13, ROMAN NUMERAL FIVE: NO ONE WANTS ELECTIONS NOW. IF, HOWEVER, MRS PERON PROVES AN INADEQUATE SOLUTION, OR IF SHE RESIGNS (AS SHE MIGHT), OTHERS, IN ORDER OF SUCCESSION, MIGHT HAVE TO TAKE OVER AND ELECTIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE CONVOKED. THE LATTER MIGHT PROVE A VIABLE SOLUTION. THE ELECTORAL LAW OF 1972 REMAINS IN FORCE, BUT THERE IS A GOOD LIKELIHOOD IT WILL BE RESCINDED AND THE OLD LAW READOPTED; HENCE, NO RUNOFF WOULD BE NECESSARY. IF ORTHODOX PERONISTS, THE UCR AND OTHER MODERATE GROUPS COULD UNITE TO FIELD A SINGLE CANDIDATE, WHICH MIGHT NOT BE EASY TO ACCOMPLISH, THEY COULD DOUBTLESS DEFEAT A CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT, WHICH HAS LOTS OF VOICE AND FIRE BUT FEWER VOTES THAN THE OTHER SECTORS. FOR PRECISELY THAT REASON, THE LEFT IS NOT LIKELY TO ACCEPT ENTHUSIASTICALLY AN ELECTORAL SOLUTION. IF THE PRESENT LAW STANDS AND A RUNOFF WERE NECESSARY, THEN THE CENTRIST CANDIDATE BACKED BY ORTHODOX PERONISTS, THE UCR AND THE MILITARY WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY DEFEAT ANY CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT IN THE SECOND ROUND.
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